

The downfall of Churchy Lafemme

I'm sick. Sick of leaving a sensitive topic alone, sick of allowing a mountain of ignorance to go unnoticed, simply because of the embarrassment that is caused when the problem is acknowledged. Sick of the people who don't see the tremendous error of their ways. Mind you, I said ways, not beliefs. On the subject of belief, to each his own. The problem is religion as an organization.

The problem with this topic is that it is a personal subject, and people of faith can't bear to consider the possibility that their existence is in vain. If God isn't sitting on a cloud waiting for them to arrive in eternal bliss, then what do

they do? What do they think?

But I am determined to speak my mind, and I hope to offend no one (although I know that is a foolish goal). I simply want to help people understand why I think what I think.

Religion — at least organized religion — is a conceptual mess of ill-logic and a fundamental lack of common sense. I do not have a problem with someone believing what they wish, no matter how outlandish, but I do have a problem with an institution that is based on belief, that digs its claws into society, and has done so for thousands of years; a hierarchy that takes control of education and influences govern-

ment with fear and manipulation. A monstrosity that commits crimes against humanity year after year in the name of God.

Unfortunately, my temporary ignorance on the subject allows me to only deal with Christianity as an example, but since this has been quite possibly the biggest hindrance of human social development in the last two thousands years, that will do just fine.

The truth is that nobody knows exactly what we are, where we came from, and where we are going. A book that charts a spiritual conquest, based on what blatantly seem like fables as opposed to a history of God's earthly presence, has

sunk into a portion of society so deeply that it would take generations just to initiate some independent thought. Millions of people live their entire lives according to what they are told by their parents and religious leaders. Oh, but we all know that parents know what's right (none of them hit their children or kill innocent people or lie or steal). And religious leaders can certainly be trusted. They saved us from the witches so many years ago, have tried to control science to serve their purpose and never have they abused their positions for their own good.

If God exists, where is he? I would be willing to go to church every Sunday, and subject myself to the cultural trap of organized religion, if he'd just come on down for a few minutes and show himself. But He hasn't, and I doubt that He ever will.

Oh, He showed Himself to Moses and the gang, not to mention the fact that his son died for our sins. Slue to that. In a society where the higher power manipulates information to keep the masses in order, why would I believe a storybook written so long ago, that is so unbelievable, and has absolutely nothing to back it up? And incidentally, Jesus didn't die for my sins. That would have been almost 2000 years ago, prior to my pre-marital sex and occasional recreational drug use.

On second thought, even if the Skipper poked his fictional head through my door one day, I'd probably tell him to take his preachy Judgement Day shit elsewhere. Thanks for the freewill, but look at the goddamn mess left. People dying by the thousands every day, corruption in every position of power, a separation between classes that you could fit a boatload of Mormons

through, and religious conflict, creating a virtually irreversible schism in global society. Nice work.

Organized religion is blind faith of followers that gives political and economic power to leaders. Blind faith is for people who are afraid of independent thought, and religious leaders are those who know how to exploit it.

Don't get me wrong. People can believe whatever they want. I do not have a problem with the concept of a God, or a lack thereof, I just find it hard to respect someone's beliefs when the beliefs themselves need to be substantiated by a trip and donation to the local church. If you believe something, truly, then all else is irrelevant. People that feel the need to validate their views with organized religion are downplaying their own beliefs by taking part in the counter-productive monster of church.

If your belief cannot stand up on its own, with only your thoughts and prayers, etc., then maybe it is you that should re-evaluate your stance.

It is true that church groups do a tremendous amount of good for most communities, but there is absolutely no need to be part of a religious group to pitch in. The alternatives are abundant.

If I am going to hell, that is my problem. I won't stand in your face and tell you my 'offensive' beliefs, if you stop trying to push the cult-like mindless unity of Christianity.

But to all believers, don't get mad at me for my beliefs. If you care to look, in North American society and especially elsewhere, I'm not the only one who doesn't share your view.

Patrick Blackie

Who do we see when we look into the mirror?

TEMUCO, Chile (CUP) — Thousands of kilometres to the south of Canada, in a small Latin American city, I discovered how far the United States has blurred our Canadian identity.

My revelation took place inside a Blockbuster video store in Temuco, a city roughly 700 kilometres south of Santiago, the capital of Chile.

Scanning the videos on the shelves I couldn't help but notice that the vast majority of movies were U.S. releases with Spanish subtitles.

Even more surprising was the lack of choices from neighbouring South American countries. To my shock, I realized I was more likely to find a Brazilian, Argentine or Cuban film in Toronto than this Chilean store.

"How sad," I told myself.

"Gingo culture is so powerful it is erasing the identity of the rest of the world. This store is no different than the Blockbuster stores back home."

And then it hit me — this store is no different than the ones back home.

I am so used to being bombarded by U.S. culture, be it music, movies or television, I no longer consider it foreign.

When I walk into a video store and see a Hollywood flick I don't think of it as being from another country. Give me an Australian and British film, on the other hand, and in my head the tag "foreign movie" lights up.

I saw Ali Farka Toure, the brilliant blues guitarist from Mali, at a musical series featuring "world music." But whenever I listen to John Lee Hooker the thought that he is from another nation doesn't

even cross my mind.

Canadians are so heavily exposed to U.S. culture that at times they think of it as their own. For instance, Metallica is not "world music" but just another average group on the radio. Pulp and Oasis, meanwhile, are "Britpop."

This assimilation also plays out in the literary world, where U.S. writers like John Grisham and Stephen King and are as natural to us as a Saturday night hockey game.

But Michael Ondaatje, wait, isn't he British?

And we haven't even begun to talk about television.

Quick, name your three favourite TV shows. Mine? Law and Order, the West Wing and the Simpsons.

How many of your favourite programs are Canadian?

Alejandro Bustos

Sloth and TV versus disorganized sport

KAMLOOPS, BC (CUP) — It is a dark and musty horror that lurks in our unspeakable nightmares and haunts our day-to-day lives.

It is couch-potatodom. It is sloth.

Once upon a time, in the deepest depths of primordial history, before the invention of the wheel and the discovery of fire, when dinosaurs walked the earth and scared small mammals into attending private schools, people listened to the radio.

Their faces would light up with joy when a favourite program crackled on primitive speakers, and after listening to sundry broadcasts they would run outside into the bright cheerful sunshine and play innocent games.

Games like full contact football that involved tackling smaller, weaker players as hard as possible. Everyone was happy — except for the small-weak types who didn't count.

Now add television, overly paid athletes, tomatoes and olive oil to this idyllic game playing state. Stir and simmer over low heat. Welcome to "the media age."

When sports is brought up in conversation today, it is almost always centred on the exploits of someone's favourite professional sports team.

Those who like sports never seem to actually play a sport, but only watch it on television, go to the occasional live game and sometimes read the results in the local newspaper.

It is a rarity to find any sort of physical play or entertainment beyond

the teenager group. Instead, an increasingly out-of-shape population sits in front of the communal social living room and vicariously experiences victory and defeat, pleasure and pain, through the 24-7 television.

Why is this? When did we become such pointless, useless slobs? It isn't like exercise takes more time than sitting in front of the boob tube for six hours.

In fact, the average university student would reap the benefits of a more active mind after an hour or two of basketball, martial arts, jogging or any other form of sport.

The part of the brain responsible for physical co-ordination is also linked to creative thought, and the stress-burn factor of physical exertion is unparalleled.

Additionally, sport is an excellent way to strengthen social bonds and indulge in close friendship without risking all that mushy "feelings" stuff.

If time is an issue, then please understand that indulging in some physical activity is actually a more efficient method of burning excess energy, socializing and countering stress than any media-related activity that can be mentioned.

How, then, can we stand to sit in front of the flashy-prettycolour box all day when sport is infinitely better for us and probably more enjoyable?

Perhaps it is our overwhelming sense of shame that we have been duped by the mass media and entertainment industry for so long.

Unable to admit we are becoming little more than industrial slaves to the television, we close our minds to the obvious and demand increasing dosages of the mass media opiate — more channels and bigger sound.

It is a vicious cycle of media dependency that, when it finally ends, will make *The Matrix* look like someone's version of an ideal utopia, yet unlike the victims in the pop cult

movie we will have done it to ourselves, willingly.

But don't give in! Rebel. Organize a street hockey game. Now! Play a sport. Meet people. Counter the alienation conspiracy being hatched by secret government bodies to make us all obedient consumers with no wills or minds of our own.

I for one have already started: I spent the holiday's with some friends

of mine creating a "Merry Christmas Multiple MurderSuicide" snow-sculpture that would make Calvin (and Hobbes) proud.

Okay, maybe it isn't traditional sport, but I was getting it sweaty with my friends trying to offend and horrify my parents' ultraconservative neighbours. If that isn't a point for my team, I don't know what is.

R. DORMA

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



"I don't remember doing this."

photo by Pat Blackie